

Queenstown Strategic Network Plan (QSNP)

Further information

August 2026

Queenstown's transport network is under real and growing pressure. The main routes through the Whakatipu Basin already carry conflicting demands from local travel, visitor travel, airport access, freight, public transport, walking and cycling. As Queenstown grows, the network will need to move more people through the same limited space, while keeping the strategic network reliable, resilient and safe.

The Queenstown Strategic Network Plan

The QSNP is a 30-year strategic plan for Queenstown's strategic transport network. It builds on previous work and sets the direction for how NZTA, working with partners, expects the network to be managed and developed over time. It is not a funded delivery programme and does not commit funding to individual projects. Its role is to guide future investigations, investment decisions and project development.

Go to [Queenstown Strategic Network Plan](#) to read the plan.

Why a new strategic plan is needed

Queenstown is facing city-scale travel demand on a network heavily constrained by lakes, rivers, steep terrain and existing urban development. Growth in residents, visitors and employment is increasing pressure on a small number of main routes and river crossings. The plan provides an updated long-term view of how known issues, previous work and future growth pressures fit together. It sets a clear strategic direction rather than starting again from scratch.

The strategic approach

The plan is built around three pillars:

- **Moving more people in less space:** Maximise the existing bus network and shift to higher capacity public transport (bus and offline).
- **actively managing demand:** Use pricing and access management tools to reduce pressure at peak times and make better use of capacity.
- **making best use of existing infrastructure:** Prioritise smarter use of existing corridors by network optimisation, managing key bottlenecks and incremental investment in capacity and bus priority.

This means targeted road and intersection improvements, better bus priority and public transport services, improved walking and cycling connections, and tools such as time-of-use charging. The aim is to improve reliability across the whole network to make sure people and goods can get where they need to go.

The main challenges the plan responds to

1. **Network performance:** Congestion, delays, and unreliable travel times.
2. **Network function:** Competing demands (private vehicles, public transport, freight, and active modes) on corridor's role and function.
3. **Network resilience:** Vulnerability to disruptions due to lack of alternative routes.
4. **Network harm:** Unacceptable impacts on people, communities and the environment.

These challenges are compounded by Queenstown's rapid population and visitor growth, evolving travel patterns, and physical constraints that limit the ability to expand the strategic network.

What the plan proposes

The plan proposes a staged package of improvements. Early priorities include Frankton Flats intersection, capacity and bus priority improvements, Ladies Mile and Southern Corridor upgrades, town centre bus hub improvements, walking and cycling connections and network optimisation. Longer-term projects may include offline high-capacity public transport and an additional Kawarau River crossing. These options may be required as growth continues but would need further investigation through future business cases before any investment decisions are made.

Congestion and travel reliability

Queenstown's geography means there is limited scope to build new roads that would significantly reduce congestion. Lakes, rivers, steep terrain and existing development constrain how much the road network can expand, while the basin continues to grow. Rather than trying to build our way out of congestion, the QSNP focuses on giving people realistic, convenient and attractive alternatives to driving. This means improving public transport, walking and cycling connections, making better use of existing roads, and helping people move around the basin in different ways.

The aim is to move more people through the limited space available, while ensuring freight, emergency services, servicing vehicles and others who need to travel by road can continue to do so reliably. Given the scale of growth expected across the Whakatipu Basin, congestion will not disappear, but the plan seeks to ensure people and goods can continue to move around the basin safely, and reliably.

Building more roads is not the only answer

No. The plan is clear that Queenstown cannot simply road-build its way out of the problem. Physical, environmental, property, construction and funding constraints make that unrealistic, and addressing the obvious bottlenecks with more general traffic capacity would simply feed more vehicles into other busy parts of the network such as SH6A and Queenstown town centre. Even if funding were available, significantly widening key roads would mean major construction on Queenstown's busiest corridors, creating years of disruption for communities, businesses and travellers before people would see the benefits.

The preferred approach is to make better use of the infrastructure Queenstown already has, move more people in less space, and actively manage demand so the busiest parts of the network work more reliably. Moving more people is better than moving more cars as it requires less space, less supporting infrastructure and has fewer impacts on the things people value most about Queenstown.

That said, road improvements remain part of the solution where they are effective and achievable. While these improvements are not without challenges, particularly affordability and complexity, they will be progressed as funding allows and when they are needed.

Building a new road around the basin, including along the base of the Remarkables

The geography of the Whakatipu Basin means there are very few realistic opportunities for entirely new strategic road corridors. Many commonly suggested options face significant physical, environmental, property, natural hazard and construction constraints, or ultimately reconnect back into the same areas where the network is already under pressure.

A route along the base of the Remarkables is one of the few corridors that could potentially provide an alternative strategic connection for the eastern corridor and is not ruled out in the QSNP. However, for it to be effective, other major investments, such as an additional road crossing of the Kawarau River between Frankton and the Southern Corridor, would also need to be in place. Even under long-term growth scenarios, relatively few vehicles are forecast to use such a route as it would result in longer journeys to the same

constrained and congested destinations, with some trips from areas such as Ladies Mile and Lake Hayes Estate effectively needing to double back to reach Frankton. The corridor would also bypass much of the existing and planned urban area, limiting the number of people and destinations it would serve.

Opportunities to unlock additional development on the new route would be limited given the challenging terrain it would pass through. As a result, the scale of benefit is unlikely to be comparable with the significant cost, environmental, natural hazard and delivery risks associated with constructing an entirely new corridor in challenging terrain within the timeframe of this plan.

For these reasons, the QSNP does not identify a Remarkables corridor as a priority investment within the current 30-year planning horizon. However, future strategic connections may warrant further investigation beyond this timeframe if growth, network conditions, technology or funding settings change.

The Gorge Road/Arthurs Point Road/Malaghans Road corridor remains important for local access, resilience and network redundancy. While it provides an alternative route for some movements, it does not fundamentally alter the strategic transport challenges associated with access to Queenstown town centre and the wider basin. As a result, the corridor plays a supporting role within the broader package of public transport, demand management and strategic network improvements identified in the QSNP.

How the QSNP will address congestion and travel reliability

The QSNP takes a range of actions to improve travel reliability and help people move more efficiently around the Wakatipu Basin. A key part of the strategy is providing practical and realistic alternatives to driving, so that people can have a choice to not always need to use a private vehicle, while protecting the ability of freight, servicing, emergency vehicles and other trips that must remain on the road network to do so efficiently and reliably. This includes:

- Making better use of the existing network through smarter traffic signals, lane allocation, bus priority measures and access management.
- Targeting key intersections and known bottlenecks where congestion regularly occurs.
- Developing a high-capacity public transport spine over time, supported by improved bus access, priority measures and interchange facilities.
- Investigating options such as time-of-use charging to help manage demand and reduce pressure on the network during peak travel times

Together, these measures are intended to move more people through the network using the limited space available, improve travel reliability, reduce delays, and help the network keep pace with Queenstown's continued growth. Together these measures are intended to improve how the transport network performs, reduce delays, and help the network keep pace with Queenstown's continued growth.

The key projects and investments planned

- Foundational Improvements - Frankton Flats intersection, capacity and bus priority upgrades
- Incremental Capacity – Intersection upgrades and bus priority (Ladies Mile and Southern corridor), and bus hub improvements (Queenstown Town Centre).
- Network-wide initiatives (incremental bus service improvements, optimisation of signalised intersections, travel demand management including Time of Use Charging scheme).
- Local road (Arthurs Point Bridge upgrade) and active mode improvements.
- Long-term transformational – Offline high-capacity PT and new Kawarau River crossing (road or offline PT) when triggered and deliverable.

How the QSNP supports public transport and active modes

- Providing high-capacity public transport. Bus priority first, then offline PT as demand grows
- Filling gaps in cycle and walking networks and first/last mile access improvements
- Feeder services, interchanges, park-and-ride and walking and cycling links connect growth areas to PT spine.

How the plan addresses environmental and community impacts

- Intersection upgrades where congestion and multi-modal conflicts are concentrated
- Improved safety and comfort for vulnerable users by expanding and upgrading walking/cycling connections and making access to PT stops/interchanges safer and more attractive.
- New crossings and connections to reduce community severance (Ladies Mile, Frankton Flats)

How the QSNP will be implemented and monitored

- Implementation is phased, with short-, medium-, and long-term actions.
- Progress is monitored against transport outcomes (access, prosperity, resilience, safety, sustainability).
- The plan will be reviewed and updated as needed to reflect changes in context, funding, and priorities.

Stakeholder involvement in developing the QSNP

The QSNP builds on previous district spatial planning, masterplans and transport business cases developed through the Way to Go partnership. The QSNP was developed by NZTA with input from key stakeholders. Their insights helped identify the strategic network challenges and possible responses. Key stakeholders included Queenstown Lakes District Council and Otago Regional Council.

Work already underway

The QSNP builds on the Queenstown Package, a Road of Regional Significance project that is already delivering improvements across the network. This includes the SH6/6A Frankton Intersection and Bus Hub Improvements, which has been in construction since April 2024, as well as the Howards Drive intersection improvements and the Pūāhuru walking and cycling bridge across SH6, both have just started construction. These projects are helping improve bus reliability, ease congestion at key locations, enhance walking and cycling connections, and support a transport network that can accommodate Queenstown's future growth.

Relationship with City Regional Deal

The QSNP is separate from, but referenced in, the Otago Central Lakes City Regional Deal. The QSNP was undertaken by NZTA in its function to plan, maintain and operate the state highway system. The City Regional Deal is a long-term partnership that sets out areas in which the Government and the sub region agree to work together on. A priority for the initial phase of the Deal is to progress delivery of initiatives identified in NZTA's Queenstown Strategic Network Plan.